

significant impact on daily lives of all Americans. The United States has benefited greatly from having a strong transportation network. But, Mr. Speaker, we are approaching a crossroads.

In Texas our identified transportation needs outstrip available funding 3 to 1. Between 2000 and 2025, studies predict that the population of Texas will increase by 9 million people, and 90 percent, 8 million of those, will be living in metropolitan areas. The transportation system in Texas must be expanded to accommodate this projected population increase and related business growth. Important transportation projects all over the State of Texas are waiting in line for limited funding. Population growth, rise in construction costs, and increased transportation demands make this line a little bit longer every year.

We have three specific needs in Texas. The current pay-as-you-go funding system only covers about a third of our needs; the State's population growth is putting additional strain on aging roadways; and it just takes too long to get roads built.

As the only Texas Republican on the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, the reauthorization of Federal surface transportation programs is the top priority for my legislative agenda in the 108th Congress. Congress and the administration continue to discuss the appropriate level of funding in our transportation reauthorization bill, but we also need to ensure that current Federal transportation dollars are being spent wisely. Our charge as congressional Representatives is to protect dollars taken from the taxpayer by streamlining and improving the activities of our Federal Government.

As a member of the committee, I wanted to be certain that the U.S. Department of Transportation was ensuring the most efficient business practices within the agency. Last year I met with Inspector General Kenneth Mead to discuss the business practices of the agency and how the Congress can curb transportation spending. Inspector General Mead and I discussed the need for greater stewardship and oversight of the Department of Transportation's programs.

To date, the Department of Transportation has not changed the way the agency disburses transportation funding to State and local entities since President Eisenhower was in office. The inspector general recommended that if 1 percent of the \$500 billion spent over the last 10 years on transportation programs was saved, this would generate an additional \$5 billion. In fact, Mr. Speaker, this \$5 billion could equate to the amount of funding needed for 4 of the current 11 major transportation programs going on in the country today. I believe this practice could better assist the Department of Transportation in spending taxpayer dollars more efficiently.

There are examples of transportation projects that are done efficiently. Interstate 15 in Utah was finished ahead of schedule and under budget. In North Texas, the Dallas Area Rapid Transit system worked within their budget last year and actually returned over \$20 million in transit funding to the Federal Government. There are bad examples. Currently the poster child for bad examples is the Big Dig project in Boston, Massachusetts, and well over \$10 billion has been invested into that project.

Mr. Speaker, the General Accounting Office has estimated that for fiscal years 1998 to 2001, the highway account lost over \$6 billion because of the ethanol tax exemption and the General Fund transfer. Using the Treasury's projections of the gasohol tax receipts, based on current law, it is estimated that the highway fund will not collect \$13 billion because of the tax exemption from fiscal years 2002 to 2012 and almost \$7 billion from the general fund transfer between the same years.

Not paying interest on the Highway Trust Fund balance, the U.S. Department of Treasury estimates the Highway Trust Fund would have earned \$4 billion from September 1999 through February 2002. For those without a calculator handy, the total now is about \$30 billion.

Mr. Speaker, there are several policy initiatives that I have asked to be included in the highway reauthorization bill. These allow States more flexibility, especially in the realm of environmental streamlining, to get projects delivered on time. The RAPID Act, the Reforming, Accelerating, and Protecting Interstate Design Act of 2003, is one of these policy initiatives, and I urge the other Members to look at this legislation and to consider its inclusion in the overall transportation bill when it is voted out of committee and on the floor later this month.

The key to a 21st century transportation program is partnering private entities with the Federal Government and allowing large transportation systems to be built in a timely and sensible sequence. My bill allows large transportation systems to be built in less time and save money by constructing roads in commonsense increments as they are needed. Among other things, the bill would streamline and expedite project delivery by allowing an environmental assessment to be prepared simultaneously for several different elements of a project. It also expands States' authorities to collect tolls on interstate highways and expands the eligible uses of toll revenues collected on those facilities.

Mr. Speaker, in short, we all know we are approaching a crossroads in transportation in this country. My goal is to facilitate and allow States greater flexibility in handling these precious dollars that they will receive under this year's Federal transportation reauthorization. Mr. Speaker, it is my goal that families will be able to

spend as much time at the dinner table as they currently spend in traffic jams.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

VACATING OF 5-MINUTE SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the 5-minute special orders of the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) and the gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER) are vacated.

There was no objection.

IRAQ 1-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LEWIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, this Friday marks the 1-year anniversary of the invasion of Iraq. Over 10,000 Iraqi soldiers are dead. Thousands of Iraqi civilians are dead. Nearly 600 Americans, 600 of our sons and daughters, are dead. Thousands more have been wounded. Physically and emotionally, their lives changed forever.

But the dead and the wounded are not the only casualties of President Bush's decision to invade Iraq. Something else has died in those desert sands. Something else has been lost. Truth, nothing but the truth, honesty.

For over a year, the American people have been deceived by the words of the President and his administration. Officials at every level have misled the people that they were elected to serve. They have also misled the community of nations.

We asked for truth, and President Bush told us that "Iraq sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa." We asked for truth, and Vice President CHENEY repeatedly warned us of close ties between al Qaeda and Iraq. We asked for truth, and Secretary of State Colin Powell told the United Nations that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. Where are those weapons, Mr. Speaker? We asked for truth, and President Bush warned us that Iraq had planes that could fly weapons of mass destruction to our shores. We asked for truth, and they told us that our troops would be greeted as liberators, that Iraqi oil would pay to rebuild Iraq.

The falsehoods go on and on. I do not know whether this administration cannot stop or will not stop. I only know that they do not stop.